

Local & State

Oregon officials seek to stop spread of coronavirus

Governor declares state of emergency

By Les Zaitz
Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon health officials are taking emergency steps to confront the spread of the novel coronavirus in the state as new cases emerged over the weekend.

Testing is focused on determining the extent of the outbreak across Oregon and who is most at risk, according to Pat Allen, director of the Oregon Health Authority.

Gov. Kate Brown on Saturday night declared a state of emergency.

“I find that the novel infectious coronavirus has created a threat to public health and

safety and constitutes a statewide emergency,” the governor said in her formal declaration issued Sunday.

As a result, major hospitals around Oregon are being cleared to conduct their own tests to detect COVID-19, a volunteer corps of retired medical professionals is being activated to help particularly in rural areas, and work groups are devising counsel for communities to deal with vulnerable populations, including one for homeless and one for elderly in congregate care.

The extraordinary steps followed new test results Saturday that identified seven new cases of people presumed infected with the disease. That included five in Washington County, and one each in Douglas and Marion counties. Statewide, health officials said 14 people have

tested positive for the respiratory disease.

State and county health officials were releasing few details about those infected. They confirmed one case involved a student from a Hillsboro middle school, where cleaning crews worked Sunday to prepare for the school to open Monday morning.

Of the new cases, three people were hospitalized at the time of the diagnosis and the other four were recovering at home with what health officials said were mild symptoms of COVID-19.

Four of the new cases involved individuals who had contact with other infected people. But in three cases, health officials said they don’t know the source, attributing the illness to “community spread.”

In all cases, health officials immediately launched contact investigations, identifying where the infected person had been in the days before their diagnosis and with whom they had contact. Individuals found to have had close contact with an infected patient are subsequently monitored.

As of Sunday, the Oregon Health Authority reported 203 people were being monitored. Another 290 were no longer being monitored after medical professionals determined they didn’t have symptoms or weren’t at risk.

The coronavirus is spread through person-to-person contact through coughing and sneezing, close contact such as touching or shaking hands, or touching a surface with the virus on it and then touching the face, according to health officials.

CHESS

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During a break between rounds, the chess players either built with Legos or played chess on extra boards.

When asked their thoughts on the game, the same word kept coming up: strategy.

“It’s a good strategy game for your brain,” said Jordan Wolfe, a third-grader.

His brother, Justin, agrees.

“It opens your mind to a new world of creativity and strategy,” he said. “You have to really think.”

Second-grader Christopher Payne focused on the game part of chess.

“You can have fun,” he said. “It doesn’t matter if you win or not. You try your best.”

Ian Wolfe watched the students’ abilities grow over the course of the sessions.

“The best part was watching their minds as they thought through moves — and loudly whisper so



Liam Conklin, left, thinks about a move in a chess game against Juston Wolfe during a local tournament held Friday at Brooklyn Primary School. Twenty-four youth from grades kindergarten to 6 participated in the event.

their opponent knew the plan,” he said with a smile.

“But they grew in confidence with the game and developing a strategy.”

Audrey Carlson had a specific reason for joining Chess for Success.

“I wanted to learn it and play against my brother,” she said.

Indeed, Wolfe heard stories of how the game continued long after the CFS sessions ended.

“It’s been cool to see parents and kids bond over the game,” he said.

Lattin said next year the CFS program will run from October to March.

“There are a lot of benefits to chess,” Ian Wolfe told parents during Friday’s tournament. “It helps basic logic skills, and learning about short- and long-term consequences in the format of a game.”

After four rounds of

chess on Friday, Haysen Hellberg earned the most points by winning all four of his games. Justin Wolfe scored second for points.

ABOUT FRIDAYPLUS

Baker FridayPlus offers diverse programs for students across the school district. To stay updated on current opportunities, check the Facebook page or go online to www.bakerfriday-plus.org

SCHOOLS

Continued from 1A

and the District’s mentoring program. Those duties have been part of the work assigned in the past to Betty Palmer, assistant superintendent, who retired earlier this year under the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System. Palmer is continuing to work for the District through the year under contract. Her position will not be filled thereafter.

Thew, who has a doctorate in special education, will earn \$113,165 per year in the position. That salary is the top step, Level D, on the District’s administrative salary schedule, which ranges from \$92,384 to \$113,165.

Angela Lattin, dean of students at Brooklyn Primary School, has been hired as director of the Baker Early Learning Center, which the District plans to begin operating in October 2021, Superintendent Witty said. Lattin will be placed at the beginning step of the Level D salary scale and earn \$92,384. A portion of her salary will be paid by partners in the Early Learning Center, such as Head Start, the Health Department and other community groups, Witty said.

Lattin also will direct auxiliary programs such as Summer Academy, Friday, Academy, Friday Plus and other programs developed by the District in her new role, Witty said.

Details for Lattin’s replacement in the role

of Brooklyn dean of students have yet to be finalized, Cathy Martin, executive secretary and personnel director for the District, stated in an email to the Herald. Martin said the position probably will be designated as a “teacher on special assignment,” which would follow the certified salary schedule. The 2020-21 salary schedule ranges from \$35,399 to \$67,101, based on an individual’s education and experience.

The Board also will review the resignations of Emily Mery, Baker Middle School social studies teacher; McKenzie Dyer, Brooklyn first-grade teacher; and Caroline Brown, Brooklyn third-grade teacher. And the classified hiring of Kimberly

Hughes, Keating Elementary; and extra-duty new hires, Matt Cunningham, head BHS tennis coach; Jonathan Cunningham, assistant BHS tennis coach; and Katie Kaaen, BMS track coach.

In other business Thursday night, the Board will:

- Recognize Promise Students of the Month — Aidan Rosales of Brooklyn Primary School, and Rebekah “Beka” Shaw, Baker High School.
- Hear a presentation by Buell Gonzales Jr., the District’s athletic director, about maximizing District grounds and buildings for student and community use; and a presentation by Keating students about the NASA project their school is participating in.

LOCAL BRIEFING

City asks to have decorations removed from Mount Hope Cemetery

Baker City’s maintenance contractor, Grass Master, will soon be doing spring cleanup and grounds maintenance work at Mount Hope Cemetery, including removal of deteriorated decorations, flowers, floral designs, thatching, edging, fertilizing, and weed spraying, weather permitting. This work is scheduled for March 30 through April 9. Any decorative items, flowers, etc., should be removed prior to March 29. Items not removed from graves and headstones by that date will be collected by the contractor beginning on that date. Collected items, other than perishable or deteriorated items, will be stored until claimed or until Nov. 1, 2020. Items conforming to the cemetery rules may be placed on or returned to the graves beginning on April 10. A copy of the cemetery rules is available on the city’s website, www.bakercity.com. More information is available by calling the city at 541-524-2047.

Heritage Museum needs volunteers

recruitment meeting and training on March 11 at the Museum, 2480 Grove St. There will be two sessions to choose from: 10 a.m. to noon or 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The museum is seeking volunteer cashiers and docents.

Soil/water conservation districts meet

The Burnt River Soil and Water Conservation District will have its monthly meeting on March 10 at 5:30 p.m. at the USDA Service Center, 3990 Midway Drive, in Baker City. The Baker Valley Soil and Water Conservation District will meet March 19 at noon, also at the USDA Service Center. The public is welcome at both meetings. To RSVP, call 541-523-7121, extension 100.

COUNCIL

Continued from 1A

Spriet, who is the Eastern Region manager for the Oregon Water Resources Department, wrote in his application that as a councilor he would seek to “build positive relationships with the city employees as well as the citizens of Baker City.

A lifelong Baker City resident, except for his time in college, Spriet’s previous government experience includes serving on the Baker County Planning Commission.

In other business, councilors will review the financial audit for the 2018-19 fiscal year, which ended June 30, 2019.

In a report to councilors, Jeanie Dexter, the city’s finance director, wrote that although the state generally requires cities to submit audits by Dec. 31, the city received a two-month extension and turned in its audit on Feb. 29.

Councilors will also review the annual capital plans for the city’s water, wastewater and storm-

water systems, as well as the annual pavement management plan.

The pavement plan, which includes the annual inventory of the condition of the city’s streets, shows that a deteriorating trend that started about 20 years ago continues.

In 2000, 97% of the city’s mileage of paved streets was rated as being in good or very good condition. A 2019 survey puts that figure at just over 40%.

City officials have said for many years that the annual preventive maintenance budget, which includes property tax and the state’s share of state gas taxes, is too small to keep up with wear on streets.

The city is proposing to chip seal sections of several streets this summer, and to apply a fog-sealer to sections of recently paved streets. The city is not proposing to repave any streets this year. The proposed preventive maintenance budget for the fiscal year starting July 1 is \$525,000.

Councilors are also slated to adopt their goals for 2020-21.

Weekly Specials March 10-16

Tuesday	All You Can Eat Spaghetti.....	\$8.95	
Wednesday	Liver & Onions.....	\$8.95	
Thursday	Chicken Fried Steak.....	\$9.95	
Friday	All You Can Eat Mini Shrimp.....	\$9.95	
	Steak & Shrimp.....	\$10.95	
	Pan Fried Oysters	\$10.50	
Saturday	Prime Rib.....	\$14.95 / NY Steak.....	\$13.95
Sunday	Chicken & Dumplings.....	\$10.95/10.50 sr	
Monday	Meatloaf.....	\$8.95	

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MOCK TRIAL

Continued from 1A

his budget.

Members of the Mock Trial team will work to pay back the \$2,000 needed to fund expenses associated with the regional and state contests by working in the concession stands through the rest of the sports seasons, Pepera said.

As the season begins next year, Pepera said he will be looking to recruit new members for the Mock Trial team to replace the five graduating seniors.

“We welcome anybody,” Pepera said, noting that Mock Trial draws students of all types.

Some are interested in learning more about

the court system or enjoy debating or just enjoy competition of any kind, including athletes, he said.

Even students who shy away from public speaking should give it a try, he said. There are roles with little public speaking required.

Pepera said he encourages his students with a pep talk to assure them that they are just as competent and just as smart as those students from larger schools.

In his fourth trip to the state contest, Pepera said the Baker students as usual were a little unnerved when they walked into a room of about 200 students from 18 schools throughout the state accompanied by their coaches and lawyers.

But once the competition began, he said the students

understood what he had been trying to tell them and replied, as they usually do: “You were right. We could bring it. We’re as intelligent and hard-working as any other group of students.”

Pepera also expressed his appreciation to the students themselves.

“The group I worked with was just a great group of men and women,” he said. “It was a pleasure to watch them grow from Day 1 to making it to state.”

This year’s state competition was won by a team from West Linn High School, with a student population of about 1,900. As the Oregon Mock Trial champion, West Linn will advance to the national contest May 7-10 at Evansville, Indiana.

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